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ABSTRACT

Winona State University's (Minnesota) Web Camp is an eight-day event that focuses on providing teaching faculty with opportunities to explore curricular enhancements through World Wide Web site creation, organization and display of information, consideration of new teaching strategies, and various means of electronic communication. Two purposes of Web Camps are to provide faculty with concentrated development time for a course Web site and to encourage the development of social connections among participants. Web Camps feature demonstrations and discussions on specific parts of software and hardware applications, incorporating technology into student curricular and co-curricular experiences, humanistic social activities, access to extensive electronic resources, informative/accurate Web sites, interesting/interactive multimedia, and easy navigation. Specific activities include: identifying instructional goals; determining appropriateness of specific technology to achieve academic goals; designing a good Web site; providing assistance with evaluation; enforcing the idea that technical and instructional support is available; working with digital cameras and scanners; experimenting with adding audio- and video-clips to Web pages; working with still and animated graphics; creating and using frames; developing forms; exploring online testing; gaining an understanding of copyright and campus Web policies; experimenting with discussion groups; other technologies, e.g., streaming media, NetMeeting, WebCompass; and "show and tell" sessions. (MES)

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Web Camp: A Faculty Development Opportunity

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Introduction

Ever-increasing use of computers on university and college campuses demonstrates the need for educational opportunities for faculty interested in integrating technology into the curriculum. Society is making demands as never before, because technology has changed not only work and the knowledge required to perform work but also national and international economics, demographics, and the structures of society. Faculty have acquired an obligation to understand technology and to convey that knowledge to their students, whether in the classroom or in Web-enhanced courses. Going along with the faculty commitment, universities and colleges have a duty to ensure that users and specialists alike have all the necessary assistance as they undertake to gain skills with the technologies they will use every day. As the electronic learning systems become more prevalent, specific support enterprises will have to undertake key activities to ensure high-quality faculty development opportunities.

How do faculty acquire the skills necessary to develop technologically-enhanced instruction? Some faculty have the intellectual ability and creativity to acquire and develop these skills independently. Many faculty do not. While some faculty readily adapt to using instructional technology in their classrooms, many others are either unable or unwilling to embrace new technologies. This reluctance may be due to a fear of the technology, lack of ideas about where and how to use the technology, or very often, lack of access to the technology.

Another large question is: when there is a need to create learning materials that stimulate student interest and measure student achievement, how do faculty present a quality curriculum that integrates technology? Because of the way in which technology is permeating our lives, it probably is safe to say that people will embrace a technology that is accessible, functional, and useable. An environment that encourages the use of technology will include opportunities to learn about technology, to explore educational implications, to discuss design issues, to obtain mentoring, to make the technology fit into the faculty work environment, and so on.

Web-enhanced courses, for example, can provide educational experiences that learners might not otherwise have: access to many more resources including simulated diagnostics and situation training along with other interactive activities. Rather than having an instructional designer or technologist prepare the Web-enhanced environment, it is my contention that faculty should assume this responsibility themselves. In order to teach well in a Web-enhanced environment, faculty need the responsibility for developing and maintaining the Web site. Providing guidance on what constitutes good design, assistance on what kind of electronic assignments work well and so on certainly are in the purview of the support individual or team. Experience with diverse teaching

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strategies and Web-enhanced curriculum will result in solid instructional events and activities that

- stimulate motivation
- make learning objectives known
- direct attention
- encourage recall
- enhance retention
- guide the learner
- promote learning transfer
- elicit performance
- provide feedback.

Success with these kinds of instructional events and activities can be achieved when faculty are assisted to develop technology solutions appropriate to their discipline and curriculum. The tone of events focusing on technology solutions needs to be at the same time upbeat and low key. Overwhelming individuals with too much information or too much glitter when they are not ready to receive it does not constitute a sound instructional strategy. As the use of information technology becomes pervasive, some members of the faculty are plunging ahead using technology to enhance their teaching. Others are cautious and wonder just how--in the long run--technology will influence their current methods of teaching.

Faculty Development

Faculty development efforts should be about creating and facilitating learning experiences that promote the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills. In "The changing face of instructional technology centers," Joan Mitchell tells us that "the use of technology in education will be stimulated when training and support are offered, multimedia collections exist, and equipment is available in a supported environment."1 Provision of such an environment will go a long way toward infusing faculty with enthusiasm for technology-integration that will make the learning experiences for their students more efficient, effective and appealing.

How such an environment evolves depends very much on support personnel who must employ sound philosophical and pedagogical reasoning that will make the learning environment valuable and worthwhile. The authors of "Reclaiming instructional design,"

state that "the technology of instructional design, like other technologies, is not a natural phenomenon. It is man-made, designed to serve our needs."2 This technology of instructional design will require that learning opportunities are available. Technical competence, solid understanding of educational rationale and instructional goals as well as the ability to provide training on hardware and software applications are critical elements in faculty development support.

Web Camps

Until recently, at Winona State University, one of the primary faculty development activities related to technology occurred in the form of "Web Camp." Web Camp is an eight day event that focuses on providing interested teaching faculty with opportunities to explore curricular enhancements through website creation, organization and display of information, consideration of new and different teaching strategies, along with trying out various means of electronic communication. Web Camps occurred to advance web-enhanced instruction as a means of promoting learning by providing access to course material, interaction between students and instructors, opportunities to test learning, and access to information outside the objectives of the classroom. Deliberately, members of faculty from different disciplines are brought together in the Web Camp setting. This mix ensures that ideas are shared across subject matter and that new relationships are established.

Through a series of tutorials and lessons, "campers" are introduced to and learn software applications that enable them to develop websites they can use to enhance their courses. Guests are invited to stimulate discussion about Internet searching, what constitutes characteristics of a good website, issues related to copyright and electronic resources, campus web policies and so on.

Presentations by colleagues who have been using web-enhancements in the classroom generate great interest. Throughout Web Camp there is an ongoing philosophical and practical discussion regarding how a subject-specific course website might (or not) provide a valuable enhancement to more traditional classroom teaching. Intentionally, Web Camp is not about training, although that is a by-product of the experience. Rather, Web Camp is about learning, enhancing, creating and interacting with software, ideas and other people and making an important discovery: faculty have an obligation to explore and come to grips with customizing and managing the instructional processes of integrating technology into teaching and learning.

Web Camps take place in a studio classroom, with computers positioned around the perimeter of the room, thus leaving the center of the room open for easy transit and communication. Web campers are placed so that novice computer users sit next to and in between those with more experience. This kind of arrangement enabled participants to call on their neighbors as a way to experience peer teaching and collaborative learning. If additional help is needed, and it often is, one or the other of the consultants is asked to lend assistance or provide an answer. Plenty of practice and development time is built in to the schedule following each tutorial and lesson so that participants have the

opportunity to apply their newly-acquired skills to designing a website. Consultants, who demonstrate the tutorials and lessons, are available throughout the eight days of each Web Camp to offer one-on-one coaching, answers, suggestions, recommendations and other assistance as required by individuals campers.

The most obvious purpose of the Web Camps is to provide faculty with an opportunity for concentrated and intense development time of a web site devoted to one or more courses. A second purpose could be described as making the effort to encourage and foster the development of social connections between and among individuals and groups. To that end, Web Camps feature demonstrations and discussions on

specific parts of software and hardware applications

incorporating technology into student curricular and co-curricular experiences

humanistic social activities

access to and creating extensive electronic resources

informative, accurate Web sites

interesting, interactive multimedia

easy navigation.

Concentrating on these features means that faculty participants learn that the key to enhancing learning and personal development is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but also to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally purposeful activities, both in and outside the classroom.

Web Camp is a dedicated development time (eight days, seven hours in length) set aside for creative purposes with consultants available to provide whatever support is necessary. The primary intention is that faculty participants become comfortable with new teaching/learning approaches and technology-integration as quickly as possible. Obtaining a reasonable comfort level is critical because it is the faculty, finally, who will design and manage how technically-mediated instruction will occur, ideally in a way that introduces new power and responsibility to the learner. I share George Connick's and Jane Russo's contention that "this is an exciting but unfamiliar role for faculty and students alike, and one that is not without its share of risk."3 By assuming this role, faculty participants gain experience in teaching with and through technology while simultaneously redefining and enlarging the scope of the pedagogies they endorse. Web Camps are hosted by several consultants who have knowledge of web page creation, image-editing software, useful technologies and how interactive, pedagogically-sound activities can be developed. Consultants are available throughout the eight-day camp and after to provide assistance to campers.

To keep the learning curve to a minimum, software applications chosen for use during Web Camp are Microsoft FrontPage™ and JASC's PaintShop Pro™. FrontPage is a powerful program that requires little experience beyond understanding basic wordprocessing concepts and electronic mail, as well as having some knowledge of the Internet and its capabilities. Because familiar concepts are used, little time has to be devoted to formally teaching software. Rather time is spent using the software to create a learning environment. FrontPage is integrated in such a way that working with tables, forms, and hyperlinks as well as inserting images and multimedia files can be done with one software package.

PaintShop Pro™ is software that campers use during Web Camp to create their own graphics or edit the graphical creations of others. Adding images to web pages can greatly enhance the impression made on viewers of the website. While used by many professionals, PaintShop Pro remains easily accessible for those with little experience in the field of graphics production and editing. PaintShop Pro™ offers easy and reliable ways to edit and tidy the image files that result from using the digital still cameras as well as flatbed and slide scanners that are available during Web Camp and after.

Web Camp is a busy and intense time (but very rewarding) for both consultants and participants. High levels of enthusiasm and cooperation, mean that the challenge of getting through the curriculum is easily met. Specific activities that occur at Web Camps include:

- identifying instructional goals
- determining appropriateness of specific technology to achieve academic goals
- designing a good Web site
- providing assistance with assessment and evaluation
- enforcing the idea that technical and instructional support is available
- working with digital cameras and scanners
- experimenting with adding audio- and video-clips to Web pages
- working with graphics, both still and animated
- creating and using frames
- developing forms
- exploring online testing
- gaining an understanding of copyright and campus Web policies

- experimenting with discussion groups
- other technologies: streaming media, NetMeeting, WebCompass, etc.
- "Show and Tell" sessions at which all participants are encouraged to demonstrate their achievements

Campers who participate in the Web Camps are expected to bring along with them the basic outline for a web project. In general, projects have revolved around a course that is scheduled for the upcoming academic year. With wordprocessed files on floppy diskettes, faculty participants are able to use the copy-and-paste function to greatly ease the transition to web page creation. Much time is devoted to encouraging campers to employ a reliable organizational structure both at the server and browser levels. So much time can be saved if this effort is made.

Conclusion

The emerging Information Age is calling for different learning environment than that of the Industrial Age. Much larger amounts of information are being screened and assimilated. Greater numbers of students arriving on campus are older bringing with them significant experience and accomplishment. "To remain employed in an unpredictable job market," says Elizabeth Tebeaux, "students can no longer depend on the future relevance of today's technology, which is becoming outmoded by the growth in knowledge stemming from technology."4 For this reason, universities are having to acknowledge that technology is gaining momentum and validity as learning is being transformed. As a result, synergy and collaboration are being elevated as technology becomes fully integrated into learning.

As the result of information technology, changes in the learning environment are possible, desirable and achievable. The advent of ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) networking protocols offers the possibility of rich, interactive learning opportunities employing multimedia, streaming audio and video, standard academic journals now available online and so on. Every day, new information resources become available that benefit active and flexible learning. With all of these possibilities, it seems wise to follow the trend to create a technologically-enhanced environment, geographically confined or otherwise, that permits people to transcend both distance and time barriers to the educational process. Web Camp events and continuing support through one-on-one and small group encounters, seem to have made a significant contribution toward creating a truly flexible learning environment, one shaped by careful thought and articulated in such a way that all members of the campus community are excited by the prospects for the future.

Notes

1. Joan S. Mitchell, "The changing fact of instructional technology centers," *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science* 16(6) (August/September, 1990): 7

2. M. David Merrill, et al, "Reclaiming instructional design," *Educational Technology* 36(5) (September/October, 1996): 5

3. George Connick and Jane Russo, "Technology and the inevitability of education transformation," in: Erwin Boschmann (Ed.), *The Electronic Classroom: A Handbook for Education in the Electronic Environment* (NJ: Learned Information, Inc., 1995), p. 18

4. Elizabeth Tebeaux, "The high-tech workplace: implications for technical communication," in: B.E. Fearing and W.K. Sparrow (Eds.), *Technical Writing and Practice* (NY: Modern Language Association, 1989), p. 137